

# The Forging of Leaders

By Jim and Carolyn Murphy

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## THE FORGING OF LEADERS

The decision of the elders was final, Pastor Al was to be dismissed. He had invested years of his life in Bible school and seminary. He had a masters degree in theology. He did everything the Lord directed: he preached, he counseled, he visited the shut-ins, he anointed with oil and prayed over the sick, he shoveled the snow off the side walks of the church, and so on...

His "fatal error"? As stated by the liberal elder board president, "Al, you're just too Bible centered. We need someone a little more flexible!"

So, Pastor Al looked with some fear to an uncertain future, wondering if he would ever preach again. Al left crying out to God, "God! I thought all my years of study, obedience and work would be rewarded. It seems all my work and obedience has led to nothing but disaster." There are countless "Al's" in God's church today serving as pastors, on staff and in positions of lay leaders.

Question: Why did this happen to Al? What should he have done? Where did he go "wrong"? There are answers for the Al's of the Christian walk. To find these answers we must go through a series of biblical principles and look at some examples from Scripture. Then we will see more clearly the "why's" of this and many similar situations that we have all seen in the church. The explanation begins at "A" of figure 1.

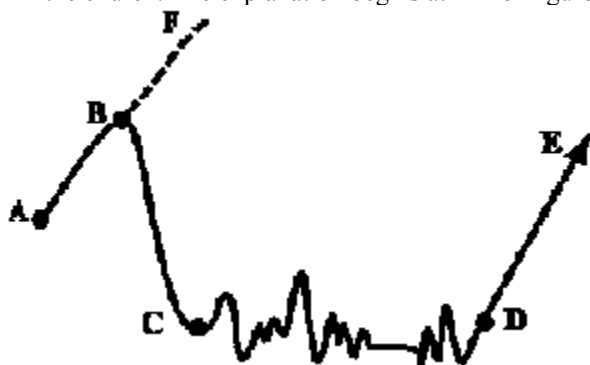


Figure 1

### "A" - The Early Days:

"A" represents the time when each of us, including Al, said "Yes" to the Lord's call on our lives. For most of us from that very moment the anointing, blessing and joy of the Lord seemed supernatural. God's presence was continual...day and night. Those early attempts at ministry and those years of training were indeed wonderful. Oh, there were problems, but nothing we and Jesus couldn't handle. It was great!

It seemed that every effort was blessed of the Lord in those early days. Things were getting better and better. Such companionship with the Lord, such supernatural peace...it seemed as if the Lord smiled on our every thought and deed.

### "B" - The Beginning of Trouble:

Then one morning we awakened to the unpleasant reality of "B". People began to be critical. Attendance at our

meetings began to falter. Message preparation became difficult and strenuous. Our people seemed to lose interest.

As a result we began to try harder, pray more...only to see the situation grow worse. Although we prayed, fasted, and cried out to the Lord both day and night, nothing could stop the downward slide to mediocrity. But it didn't stop there. Everything went wrong until we arrived at "C", the bottom. How long did the slide take from "B" to "C"? Usually it takes a number of years, two, five, or even ten or more? How long ago was it when we enjoyed those wonderful years at "A", or can we even remember that far back? Ah, yes, those were the "good old days", weren't they?

### "C" - The Pits:

At "C" every failure, disappointment and rebuff known to man seems to happen and often all at once! We do our very best, strain at every effort but it never seems to be good enough. Maybe we aren't fired like Al, but the situation is far from what we would like it to be. Things just haven't progressed as we'd hoped or planned. Note that through "C" there are little "highs" but the great preponderance of experiences seem to us as though from the valley of despondency and depression.

It's here at "C" that self-doubts, fears, disappointments and failures all too often seem to be our lot. It is extremely important for us to understand that the enemy of our soul often comes to us when we are at "C" to "help us". It is also important to know that the enemy has the ability to implant thoughts into our mind. They are described in Ephesians 6:16 as "fiery darts". They are always very subtle and are usually spoken in the first person voice so as to make us think they are our own thoughts. The voice most often comes during the low times, usually after some particularly devastating disappointment. The voice will often say something like, "I guess I'm just not too smart...I really missed it yesterday..."

A pause while your mind ponders the thought, then after you have accepted that distorted dart as fact the voice continues, "Really, I should just quit. I could get a job and take better care of my family."...another pause while you accept that thought as your own. Then the voice continues, "I'm beginning to wonder if God called me..."

During the entire span of time in "C" the presence of the Lord is nowhere to be found. It's as if He were in Siberia or some other far away place. The only time you ever think you feel His anointing is when you are actually ministering or telling someone about Jesus. Please note though that He has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Heb 13:5 NIV). He hasn't gone anywhere. He is still right by your side. What he has done is remove your awareness of His presence.

"C" seems to drag on endlessly. Many who started with great zeal at "A" begin to drop out of the race during "C" believing Satan's lies. They imagine themselves to be complete spiritual failures and enter the world's work force leaving behind the wonderful, youthful dream of a lifetime in

the Lord's service. Some become angry at God and in time quit serving Him. Many even quit attending church.

Why does God allow these things to happen? We may answer that question by stating that He wants to see if you have what it takes to continue in obedience. He also wants to teach you to walk by faith, not by feelings. His intent is to draw out the qualities of endurance, fortitude and determination to follow Him wherever the path leads.

"...And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. (Rom 5:2-5 NIV).

The development of these qualities would never happen if His manifest Presence were continually sensed.

How much time is spent in "C"? The answer is different for each individual. It could be as little as a year...or as long as twenty-five or thirty years. It depends on how fast we learn the lessons God is trying to teach us.

### **Three Human Responses**

For those with determination who stick it out there are three human responses or phases they must pass through.

#### **Phase One: "Why Did This Happen to Me?"**

Phase one I have entitled "Why did this happen to me?" The thought continues, "I don't deserve this. I've done nothing wrong. The only thing I've done is obey the Lord!"

When we analyze these statements we come to a real revelation. It seems that "I" am the center of the universe, doesn't it? "I, ME, I, I..." where is Jesus in all these piercing questions? Isn't our commitment supposed to be Christ centered? This phase reveals our self-centered approach towards our ministry work.

#### **Phase Two: "The Romans 8:28 Step."**

This phase represents a quantum leap in Christian maturity from phase one. Phase two is what I call the "Romans 8:28 step".

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28 NIV).

What a giant step! What growth from the "Why me?" to "All things work together for the good..." But, in a subtle way, "I" am still at the focal point...He is working for my good... God will ultimately make this all work for my good." I am still trying to make myself feel better.

#### **Phase Three: "The Philippians 1:21 Step."**

Phase three represents the ultimate attitude goal in Christian service. During one of the Apostle Paul's times of imprisonment he was being victimized by false preachers who were trying to stir up anger against him by preaching Christ out of vindictiveness. By so doing they hoped to make

matters worse for Paul. Now that's a genuine reason to become upset, isn't it? But instead of being upset Paul rejoiced that Christ was being preached! Phase three is what I call the "Philippians 1:21" step. This is where God has been trying (for years?) to get us! Paul said,

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. (Phil. 1:21 NIV).

Who is the central figure now, Paul or Christ?

Somewhere between the beginning of "C" and phase three the "I" died. Could it be that God has finally succeeded in getting our old man to the cross? Could it be that the old self is at last crucified? Is it possible that this has been God's goal, God's purpose for allowing the horrors of "C" to persist? Paul, is this what you meant when you said,

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."? (Gal 2:20 NIV).

I can almost hear Paul respond, "Yes! This is indeed what our Lord Jesus has been after! The true end of self and the beginning of Christ!

Back in "A" and "B" self was the prominent figure. Oh, we couldn't see it, but it was there. Only in phase three does our old fleshy self finally come to the only end that adequately deals with it...the cross of Christ. This opens a new, glorious door to: "**D**" - "**The End of 'C'...Thank God!**"

It's not that we'll never again have any problems. No, we see from the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians that he still had troubles. The thing that changed was that the same problems no longer had the devastating power over Paul they once had. As with Paul, once we pass phase three we are free! Now we can rejoice with Paul when such problems occur saying, "As long as Christ is exalted it's for the best!"

It is in this phase that God can begin to fully use us in the call He has on our life. Now He may entrust us with the true treasures of His Word. Now He can set us in a place and know we won't move until He tells us to move...and now, no flesh will share in His glory for it has been crucified.

For some readers who dropped out of the race somewhere back in "C" I want to remind you of Romans 11:29 (NIV): "For God's gifts and his call are irrevocable."

Yes, the call is just as valid now as it was back years ago at "A". The greatest harvest of souls this world has ever seen is now on the horizon. No, nothing you have done has revoked His call. Reach out and grab hold again. Come on, get back in the race!

#### **"E" - Moving in the Call.**

Most likely there won't be a brass band or a parade to announce your entrance into the ministry call God has prepared for you in "E". Most likely the full entrance will be nothing like it was imagined when you were back at "A". But there will be a supernatural peace and joy accompanying the entrance. When you reach "E" you will fully enter into your call for good. This time you will enter without the flesh or any grandiose illusions. God's will has prevailed. Hallelujah!

Now a word of caution: we must continually be on the lookout for Satan's: **Seven Big Guns.**

Between "A" and "E" every successful sojourner learns about Satan's powerful weapons. Weapons he has skillfully tailored for your destruction.

From the moment you said "Yes" to Jesus back at "A" Satan has had you in the cross-hairs of his gun scope many times. Let's examine his Seven Big Guns and see how they work against us:

#### **Gun One - Discouragement.**

The tactical use of this weapon is very effective after a big disappointment, failure or set-back in life. The human victim is already laid low. He is feeling that God doesn't really love him (remember the "voice" back at "C"?). Then Satan's finger begins to slowly squeeze the trigger...BANG! Immediately comes that "voice" again, "This is so depressing...I just want to crawl away some place and die!" Or, "I want to forget all about this stupid 'call' and get on with life..."

Satan never uses this gun when we are up and on top of things, he has other effective weapons for us at those times. It's only when we are already down and defeated that he uses this weapon against us.

#### **Gun Two - Self-Pity.**

Tactically, this gun is most effective when it's fired immediately after Gun One. It's the old "left-right" punching routine that boxers find so effective. Stun the victim with a left jab then finish him off with a powerful right...WHAM! and he's out.

Gun Two's voice says, "I'm so miserable. I'll never be able to overcome this...I don't really deserve this. No one in the church loves me...woe, woe, woe."

#### **Gun Three - Fear & Intimidation.**

This gun usually stays loaded all the time. The enemy is waiting for just the right moment to fire it. Immediately after one of our "ministry failures" we see the muzzle flash and smell it's powder as we are struck with a horrible, paralyzing fear. Often the first round is "fear" and it is followed closely with the second round of "intimidation".

Feelings of inadequacy and inferiority abound as waves of fear sweep over us, fear of ministerial failure, fear of the future, fear of marriage problems, financial fears...the list seems endless as Satan's blasts continue on and on.

#### **Gun Four - Greed.**

This gun is held in reserve and used primarily on those who have an inordinate love affair with money. Satan keenly observes the manner in which we handle and regard money. If he sees that we are squeaky clean we'll most likely never be shot at with this gun...but if not, watch out!

What happens is that opportunity after opportunity will fall into our hands to get extra money. On the surface it's perfectly legitimate, but inwardly we know that it's not quite right. But "No one will ever know." Ultimately it becomes a consuming desire until we rationalize that, "The end does justify the means."

Then one day a conversation is overheard, "Did you hear about what pastor \_\_\_\_\_ did? It seems that he was caught..."

#### **Gun Five - Power.**

This gun is maintained and used on a different category of people. It is very effective on those who are especially clever at manipulating and using devious means to gain and maintain power and control over others. Those of us who have shortcomings in this area will surely become acquainted with the sound of this gun! Inevitably the lust for power brings dryness to the soul and barrenness to a ministry call.

#### **Gun Six - Illicit Sex.**

Male and female, young and old, the lovely and the not-so-lovely, be we black, white, hispanic, asian or whatever, we all are occasionally targeted by Satan with this gun. Even if you are truly pure in this area he will fire a round at you from time to time just to see if your guard is still up. But if this is a problem of yours, look out! Again, the ultimate consequence is as with Gun Four (greed), it ends with, "Have you heard about So- and-so..."

#### **Gun Seven - Health.**

In answer to the question, "Why are you so health conscious?" a very healthy minister responded, "If you loose your health, you lose your ministry." This surprise gun blast from Satan usually is preceded with a sleepy, subliminal voice that says, "That'll never happen to you. You're in great shape. Don't worry about those extra pounds, those bad eating habits or the fact you drive yourself so hard. Those nutritional rules and 'Sabbath rests' are for the weak, not you."

The enemy uses this gun with tragic effectiveness on many of the Lord's promising and powerful servants. He has special projectiles labeled "stroke", "heart attack", "cancer", and other such maladies that are often preventable with proper cautions such as diet, exercise and proper medical attention. Please note I am not saying every stroke, form of cancer, heart problem, etc. is "our fault" or directly from the enemy. What I am saying is that the Lord calls us to use our good sense in health habits to keep our bodies as fit as possible for His service.

These seven guns are guns of infamy. They have been the ruin of more men and women of God than any other known cause. I'm not suggesting that we become so fearful that we never venture out, but I am saying we need to be fully aware of Satan's tactics so we stay always on the alert. We never quite grow beyond their range.

Looking back again at Figure 1 we need to address "F". The dotted line of "F" is representative of the person who has great personal skill and charisma. His or her ministry appears to be doing well by outward standards. However, that person refuses to "fail" or be subjugated, even by the Holy Spirit. Thus, that person seems to never experience "C."

The devil is quick to point out the success of "F" to those poor sods in "C". The successful accomplishments of those at "F" is often recited nightly to those who are "failing" at "C". They make good bullets for the Discouragement and Self-Pity guns.

To be sure, it takes years of hurts, bruises and no small measure of "failures" to get to "E" and there seems to be at least two "F's" for every "E". What's behind this? Why didn't "F" have to go through "C" and "D"?

### Two Ministry Anointings.

To answer the above questions we need to know that there are two ministry anointing. These two anointings are what I call the Anointing of Saul and the Anointing of David. Both men were anointed by the Lord, and both served the Lord in the beginning.

What is the difference between the two anointing? An examination of Figure 2 answers the question.

MINISTRY ANOINTING	
SAUL	DAVID
1. The anointing	1. The anointing
2. The Placement	2. The Heart Molding
3. The Heart Molding	3. The Placement

Figure 2

Saul was 1) anointed, 2) placed in office, and then God began 3) the remolding of his heart to make him fit to be a king. David, on the other hand, was 1) anointed, 2) heart molded by God for almost twenty years, and then 3) placed on the throne.

Saul then is an "F" while David is representative of "E". David suffered humiliation and tasted the bitterness of "failure" as he fled from Saul. But even there it is important to understand that David was exactly where God wanted him to be.

On the other hand, Saul, once he had the placement as king, rejected God's instructions and exalted himself. He even erected a memorial in his own honor (see I Sam 15:12). "Success" was his goal.

Today the Sauls of the church often seem to get all the breaks and the good press coverage while the Davids are out there in oblivion tending a small flock of sheep for the Lord - somewhere near Adullams Cave. Many of these Davids seem to be eternally stuck at "C". It is worth remembering that on two occasions David had opportunity to slay Saul, thereby making himself king. To his eternal credit David refused to promote himself. He understood that he was God's instrument and that only God would promote him...in God's time. Remember too the end of Saul. He died out of fellowship with the Lord, yet still dutifully serving in his office. Saul, once he began rejecting God's heart molding, never knew the joy of close fellowship with the Father.

Bringing these two anointing down to the present, what about the people who are saved and taught under the Sauls of the church? Are they genuinely saved? Yes, every one is fully and completely saved! God honors His Word. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (Rom 10:13 NIV). Are they taught? Yes, they are taught. God is faithful to the heart.

In conclusion, if you have been ministering at "C"...possibly under a Saul's shadow, dodging Satan's big guns and wondering if it's all worth it, I have great news for you. Yes! this is the very process used by God to forge men and women of steel...mighty warriors prepared for battle! And rest assured, when you emerge from "C", go through "D" and move into "E", it is the most powerful and lasting anointed ministry call God has for His beloved children. It is the men and women whose ministries have entered the "E" stage who will move mountains for His kingdom.

## HUNDREDFOLD MINISTRIES, INTERNATIONAL

P. O. Box 625  
Blue Jay, CA 92317

Telephone 909/336-9701

E-mail: [jim.murphy@hundredfold.org](mailto:jim.murphy@hundredfold.org) Web site: [www.hundredfold.org](http://www.hundredfold.org)

Rev. Jim Murphy and his wife, Carolyn, of Blue Jay, California, United States, head Hundredfold Ministries, International. They write Christian teaching literature and travel to the Developing Nations of the world teaching Christian leaders. Hundredfold Ministries, Int'l is a cross-denominational Christian ministry dedicated to strengthening the church in the Developing Nations of the world.

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